

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2002

• A Note From the Editor

Unlike the April issue, this newsletter is packed with information; it's either feast or famine, and when it rains it pours. I actually needed to leave some things out and trim some reviews to get a reasonable size. Still, this remains the biggest issue yet.

Several exciting features of this issue include the news of the upcoming Serpentarium, the Yeo serpent recording project, and (a-hem!) the Squarpen project. Enjoy, and keep those contributions coming.

Paul Schmidt

New Materials

- Deux, CD recording featuring Michel Godard (serpent & tuba) and Pierre Favre (percussion); Altri Suoni # AS101. Obtained from publisher's website, <www.altrisuoni.com>

Serpentist Michel Godard has teamed with famous percussionist Pierre Favre to good advantage on his latest album *Deux*. This is a combination of avant-garde and more traditional jazz forms, arranged as a series of nine duets interspersed with more soloistic tracks that feature both performers but focus on one of them. Most of the selections are by the performers, but a couple of them have outside influence, e.g. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's *Angelica*. Favre uses just about every percussion instrument imaginable, often in what must be overdubbing, and Godard uses serpent, tuba, voice and combinations of the three. From the opening track's foghorn serpent and lighthouse bell effects, the music sweeps through cool jazz, middle eastern caravans, Stravinsky *Rite of Spring* inspired dances, avant-garde, the steppes of Tibet and alien outer reaches. As with most of Godard's compositions, the listener is well advised to simply let the music take you where it will.

Note that this recording is poorly distributed. It was finally obtained directly from the publisher, whose website could stand to be better organized. The company is Italian-Swiss, but the website is in English. If you choose to order from this site, note that the prompts suggest that you need to log in, but there is no place to actually do this! It turns out that login is required only for retailers, who enter the website via a different URL. So, just click on the AS101 link on the first page of the site, then click the shopping cart icon below the album cover photo, and proceed to checkout.

- In the previous issue of this newsletter, an anticipated "new" recording by Michel Godard was mentioned. It turns out that this recording is actually not new, and is apparently out of print, and was in fact not even a Godard album! A glitch in a publisher's webpage was the cause of this bit of erratum.

- *Pierre et le Loup*, CD recording featuring the Nouvel Ensemble Instrumental de Conservatoire National Supérieur, Jacques Pési, director, with Bernard Fourtet (serpent), Jean Tubery (cornetto), Stefan Legee (sackbut) and Eddy Mitchell, narrator: EMI Records / Virgin Classics # 7243 5 45369 2 2 (also listed as 5 45369), recorded 1999. Obtained from Amazon France <www.Amazon.fr>

This is a French language reading of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (*Pierre et le loup*) featuring distinctive early instruments. The album's producers have taken the classic children's story and reframed it as a young person's guide to instruments their mother never told them about. The narrator is middle aged French rock'n'roll star - turned - vocal talent Eddy Mitchell. Peter, instead of being a string section, is now a baroque violin. His grandfather is Bernard Fourtet's serpent, and the part of the wolf is played on accordions. Peter's friends are the bird (Chinese sheng), the duck (shawm), and the cat (oboe d'amour). The hunters are ensemble La Fenice's Jean Tubery (cornetto) with Stephan Legee's sackbut and steel drums. All narration is in French.

After the subject's 24 minute run, the CD continues with 18 tracks introducing the players and their instruments.

The sheng performs a traditional tune *The Flight of the Partridge* on one track following another track with the narrator describing the instrument and its uses. In the same manner, pairs of tracks present the oboe (playing the theme from Ravel's *Bolero*), the shawm (an improvisation), the accordions (*Ellin Polka*), sackbut (*The Swan* from Saint-Saens' *The Carnival of the Animals*), the cornetto (van Eyck's *Questa Dolce Sirena*), steel drums (improvisation), and serpent (Scarlatti's *Le Papillon Léger*). The cornetto, sackbut and serpent then join for Jean de Castro's *Una Strana Fenice*, and the orchestra is presented by way of the final track.

In addition, the CD is an interactive one, so it also works in a computer to present educational interviews with the instruments. This is a fine idea for an album, and the presentation is first rate. I would prefer that the narration were in English, in order to reach a wider audience, but this is a minor quibble; even if the listener does not understand the text, it's still kinda cool.

- Michel Godard has a new recording on the Enja label called *Castel del Monte II*, a sequel to his previous CD in the same label. The publisher's website lists the CD as catalog # ENJ-9431 2 with a release date of September, but as of this writing it has yet to appear on shelves or on-line distributor's catalogs.

- *Antique Brasses*, CD recording featuring The London Gabrieli Brass Ensemble, Christopher Larkin director, with Stephen Wick and Tony George (ophicleides), Ralph Dudgeon, Stephen Hollamby and John Wallace (keyed bugles), Crispian Steele-Perkins (keyed trumpet) and many other natural trumpets, natural horns, etc. Hyperion # CDA67119, recorded 2000. Obtained from Amazon

This recent release features some of the top players of historic brass instruments, performing some lesser known selections. The tracks include *Aufzug* by Salieri, *Quatuor pour être exécuté à la Grotte tuonante près le Scoglio di Virgilio dans le Golfe de Naples* and *Three Pieces for the Slide Trumpet*, both by Sigismund Neukomm, the *Horn Concerto in F* and *Four Pieces for the Band of the Swedish First Lifeguard Regiment*, both by Bernhard Crusell, *Three Duets for Two Horns* by Rossini, *Adagio and Polonaise for Solo Keyed Bugle and Brass* by Carl Braun and Crusell, *Septet* by Franz Lachner, *Sonata No. 1 for Two Horns* by Otto Nicolai, "*Adagio Cantabile*" from *Septet Op. 20* by Beethoven, and *Music for the Wertheim Harmoniemusik* by Prince Carl Friedrich von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg. The performances are of course first rate and the selections are interesting.

- An older recording of the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique* with the London Classical Players and directed by Roger Norrington, originally on the EMI/Angel label in 1989, is now available in re-release as Virgin-Veritas #

5 61379 2, with the Berlioz *Les Francs-juges, Op. 3* added for good measure. Stephen Wick and Stephen Saunders are the two ophicleide players.

- *Pérégrinations Goldberg*, CD recording featuring Nancy Huston, spoken text, Freddy Eichelberger, harpsichord, and Michel Godard, serpent. Naïve/Livre Disque # V 4874, the CD was submitted by Michel Godard

Here is a very unusual recording. Since this reviewer does not read French, and all the copious liner notes are in that language (this is actually a CD 'jewel-case' sized hardcover book, with an internal liner for holding the actual CD), the actual intellectual content and/or any in-jokes will be bypassed for purposes of this review. Over the course of 13 tracks, the harpsichord plays bits and pieces from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Here and there the serpent joins in, or sometimes takes over to the point of becoming a soloist. The serpent part is sometimes related to Bach's original theme, and sometimes not. The harpsichord playing is, however, always in the background, for when the serpent is not present the vocal overlay by Nancy Huston is. The reviewer laments that whatever she is going on about is not apparent to non-French speakers, although she sometimes slips, conversationally, into English for a few beats. Note: This reviewer typed all text from the back cover paragraphs into a French/English translation program, and got only gibberish back....this happens when lots of slang is used in the source. It should be mentioned that Godard supplied the musical arrangement that we hear, while Huston provided the words. Overall, a unique experience for the listener, but this reviewer found it less than satisfying musically. Obviously the text is the key, but the concept was lost on this reviewer. The adventuresome and French speakers, you may want to check this CD out.

- The Boston Baroque's new recording of Handel's *Water Music & Music for the Royal Fireworks*, with Doug Yeo on serpent, is scheduled by Telarc to be available in January of 2003. The catalog number was not available at the time of this writing.

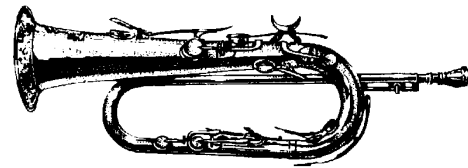
- The Mellstock Band, with serpentist Phil Humphries, has a Christmas CD out titled *Hey for Christmas!*. It does not appear in the catalogs of major retailers or online sources, but is listed as being available on The Mellstock Band website. The site includes an order form which may be printed out and mailed with a cheque to the group's address. Other Mellstock recordings that include serpent may also be purchased using the form; these include *The Dance at the Phoenix*, *Tenants of the Earth* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The Mellstock Band, 22 Swinbourne Road, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4PQ. The website is <www.mellstockband.com>

- Doug Yeo and the editor have been rediscovering some historic recordings that include the serpent, and find that two of them might be significant as the earliest serpent

recordings. Possibly the earliest recording is *Spotlight on Brass*, an old 1956 LP (Vox DL300) featuring Roger Voisin (first trumpet, BSO), Harold Meek (horn, BSO), and Joseph Orosz (trombone, BSO) playing various museum pieces on representative and appropriate selections; the serpent gets a scale and two selections as performed by Voisin. The serpents used were both from the Casadesus Collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. An interesting recording if you can find a used or library copy.

Also from 1956 but probably only the second oldest recording, is *Hoffnung 's Musicfestivals*, re-issued currently as EMI/Angel # CDM 7 63303 2, a 2-CD set that includes the infamous festival ensemble (two piccolos, heckelphone, two contrabass clarinets, two contrabassoons, serpent, the 'Anaconda', harmonium, hurdy-gurdy and subcontrabass tuba [known variously as 'THE TUBA' or 'The Hoffnung Tuba']) performance of Gordon Jacob's *Variations on "Annie Laurie"*; the serpent was played by Eric Halfpenny and Nigel Amherst played the Anaconda.

- Three previously unmentioned serpent compositions have come to the attention of the editor. Trevor Mohr, a professional mandolin and bass player working in Korea, has reportedly composed three pieces of significance. His first composition was titled *Sonata aus dem Friedhof (Graveyard Sonata)*, and is for two serpents and piano. His second piece was called *Ihr Kinderlein Kommet*, and is a duet for serpent and soprano voice, basically variations on a German folk song turned into a long aria; he premiered this piece in 2000 as part of a German advent service with singer Tina Collins, substituting his double bass for serpent. His latest and most substantial work to date is *Symphony #2 in C major "Symphony of the Serpents"*. It calls for two players each on 5 serpent parts (actually 10 individual



parts), plus percussion (no orchestra). The first movement is *Qatal fi Afrika (Murder in Africa)*, the second movement is *Elegy for the Living*, the third is *Wake Up Covered in Angry Serpents*, and the fourth is *Finale, Never Sleep*. The piece borrows themes from around the world, and is intended to portray the serpent as an instrument that belongs in the modern orchestra with its own special place. He used things he knows work well with serpent, such as the key of C, simple tuttis, and choral type settings, and chose to give the symphony a sound both primitive and contemporary. The composer writes that he has been a fan of the serpent for the last 13 years, and is seeking players and/or organizations that might be able to perform his compositions with the proper instrumentation. While the symphony might require an event such as the Serpentarium to get enough players together at the same time, never mind the orchestra, the other pieces might be more accessible. The composer may be reached by email at <tmohr@bw.edu>, or by writing to Trevor Mohr, Hanwoori Hall, International House 112, Ewha Womans University, 11-1 Daehyun-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul 120-750, Korea.

- Two recordings that feature serpent and/or ophicleide have been ordered for review, but have not arrived at the time of writing. One is a 1997 recording of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* on Decca, # 455 688-2, Edinburgh Festival Chorus & Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The other is a pop recording titled *No Roses*, with Shirley Collins and the Albion Country Band. More on these in the next issue.



EBF Cornetts and Sackbuts, with Serpents, pose prior to breaking for the traditional pizza party

Getting Serpents

Here is the list of Serpent makers who have made themselves known to us. Both Monk and Harding instruments are available through dealers, and all makers will deal directly with individual customers.

Christopher Monk
Instruments
(Jeremy West)
Workshop 4
30-32 Devonshire Road
Forest Hill
London SE23 3SR
England

Phone & fax:
+44 (0)2082 916900
www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html
<cmi@jeremywest.co.uk>

David Harding
56 Netherton Road
Appleton
ABINGDON
Oxon. OX13 5JZ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

• See the 'More Exciting News' section for information on homemade serpents and ophicleides.

Robb Stewart Brass Instruments
140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Arcadia, CA 91006
USA

Phone: 626-447-1904
<oldbrass@worldnet.att.net>

(ophicleides, metal serpents, bass horns)

Nicholas Perry
20 Queen Street
St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL3 4PJ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080
(early cimbasso, bass horn)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

Phone: +44 (0)1617 407778
(ophicleides)



In Memoriam: Roger Smith

Roger Smith, an all-around accomplished musician and serpentist, has died at the age of 62. Residents of the Isles of Scilly (UK) are mourning a musician held in the highest esteem. He was in charge of school music in the islands for 15 years before his retirement in 1999 and was well known to many visitors as well as Scillonians.

A most versatile instrumentalist with a breadth of musical interest and knowledge he, apart from school teaching, sounded the Last Post at island Armistice Services, regularly played the accordion at May Day celebrations in the Hugh Town park, played the organ for the local choral society, blew his trumpet in *Messiah* and in Truro Cathedral. He was also an accomplished pianist, keyboard player and violinist and with his "Wayside Music" was a familiar figure with his wife Margaret as an entertainer at fêtes, cream teas, in the Hugh Town park and in the streets. "He was a consummate musician who could play anything and everything," said teacher colleague Richard Farr.

Roger, who had attended Trinity College of Music in London, first came to the islands in 1976 from Dorset, where he was senior brass teacher. On the mainland he taught variously at Ivybridge Secondary School, Totnes King Edward VI School and Dartington College.

Early music was one of Roger Smith's great interests and before he came to the islands would play the serpent, rackett and crumhorn. He continued this in Scilly under the name "The Waites" - 17th century "town band".

Roger was one of those attending the 1990 400th Anniversary Serpent Celebration in London at St. John's, Smith Square.

Submitted by Nigel Nathan, and including excerpts of the obituary that appeared in the June 27th issue of "The Cornishman"



Paul Schmidt playing the Squarpent prototype

Workshops

- Cape Cornwall Serpentarium 2003

For this upcoming biennial event, Andrew van der Beek cannot manage to have us at Lacock. But do not despair, it will instead be hosted by Nigel Nathan and his partner Thelma Griffiths at Boswedden House in the far west of Cornwall (the closest we can get in England to our friends in the USA!) from Friday 23rd May to Monday 26th May, which is the late Spring Bank Holiday in the UK. Phil Humphries of the London Serpent Trio will be at hand to guide our musical meanderings.

The Serpentarium will be residential with space for 14-16 in the house, a camping option and overflow accommodation nearby. Since this is a holiday weekend, this latter may not be available for late bookers who may therefore be forced to camp – so book early! Cost is £175 (£125 for campers) for the three days. Full details on request or on receipt of the £40 booking deposit (Credit cards, UK Debit cards, Sterling cash or cheques payable to Boswedden House or US \$60 cash or checks payable to Nigel Nathan accepted). Train or bus service to Penzance and thence by bus to St. Just is a viable transport option.

For those of you who would like to make a longer holiday of it in order to explore this beautiful and fascinating part of the world, you will be welcome to come early and/or stay on as regular B&B guests. Please book at the same time as above.

For Nigel's contact information see 'About the Organization' on page 7



Boswedden House

Adjacent to the cliffs of Cape Cornwall, most western point in England, and site of the 2003 Serpentarium

- Report on the Eighteenth Early Brass Festival

The annual Early Brass Festival, sponsored by the Historic Brass Society and formerly held in Amherst, took place this year from July 26 through July 28 at the University of Connecticut at Storrs.

Those participants who were able to be in the area in the early afternoon hours of Friday visited an open house at David Neill's 'Brass Players Museum' in Springfield, MA. Instruments for sale as well as those in David's personal collection were made available for playing and general handling. Afterwards, other participants were greeted in Storrs as they arrived over the afternoon, with informal playing sessions taking place concurrently. Paul Schmidt on serpent was joined by sackbutists Peter Dawson and Nate Wood for sight reading of trombone trios. Later in the afternoon, John Benoit arrived and they worked through several quartets.

In the late afternoon, participants attended a lecture demonstration lead by Michael Holmes and his 'Orchestra of the 17th Century', a.k.a. 'Baltica Americana', for *Brass Works of Jean Sibelius*. The lecture included fine performances of several of the composer's brass ensemble pieces. Afterwards, the traditional festival dinner was held at the nearby Chang Chinese Restaurant, where festival coordinator Matt Hafar entertained with his creative table napkin tricks.

After dinner, participants resumed their playing sessions. The cornetts and sackbuts met under the direction of Orum Stringer, playing selections by Heugel, Trombetti and G. Gabrieli. Participating were Susan Wilcox, Charlotte Leonard, Fred Moyes (sackbuts), Orum Stringer (cornett) and Paul Schmidt (serpent).

Saturday morning Joe Kaminski presented a paper *Ivory Trumpet Ensembles in Asante: Drawing Implications for a History of the Genre in Ghana and Beyond*, describing the use and history of these instruments. This was followed by Henry Howey's *Brass Music of Ponchielli*, including band membership rules, etc. in Cremona; this was a follow up to another paper presented at a previous EBF. Next, Richard Martz presented *Is Left Right? The Horn on the Other Hand*, discussing historic practice regarding horn handedness.

Playing sessions resumed, with the cornetts and sackbuts working up selections by Cesare, G. Gabrieli, Josquin and others. In addition to those players mentioned from Friday's sessions, Gene Griswold (cornett), Henry Howey, Israel Kopman, Steve Lundahl, Marcia Madrano, Doug Young, Fred Moyes, Charlie Wiberalske (sackbuts) and Laura Conrad (serpent) completed the sizable band.

After lunch, Peter Ecklund presented *The Early European Tours of Louis Armstrong*, followed by Susan Thompson with *Brass Instruments in the Yale Collection: The*

Photography of Brass Wind Instruments: Why It Is So Fiendishly Difficult. Playing sessions then resumed until late afternoon, when Eva Heater presented a newly discovered horn piece *Concerto a 4 Corno Solo & Violin et Basso* for horn and small string orchestra, marked with the name 'Viani', who might have been the copyist rather than the composer. Playing sessions, interrupted by a quick dinner, resumed and continued until late evening, when the traditional EBF pizza and beer party commenced.

Sunday morning began with a paper by Egberto Bermúdez, *The Ministriles Tradition in Latin America, Part II: It's Early Establishment (1500-1550) in Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean and its Present Survivals in Traditional Music Styles.* Playing sessions resumed with the various groups, formed over the previous two days, getting selections ready for the final concert. Some in the cornett & sackbut band departed early, but Rigal Lustwerk and Kiri Tollaksen joined the ensemble at this point. These sessions took place in segments, with the HBS Membership Meeting and a special cornett & sackbut playing session led by Wim Becu fitting in between. Wim had been scheduled to preside over a more extensive session, but flight and traffic delays left little time to meet before his other commitment later in the afternoon. Pieces played during his session were *Sapientia* by De Sayve, and *Exaudi Deus* and *Canzon Primi Toni* by G. Gabrieli.

Finally the concluding Gala Concert took place in Von der Mehden Hall. An ensemble of natural trumpets kicked things off with a fanfare by Dvorak. Next, Robert Civiletti (natural trumpet), Cynthia Marrs (harpichord) and Katy Samrow (soprano-contralto), performing under the name 'Buccina Cantorum', presented four selections by Scarlatti (*Mio tesoro per te moro, Con voce festiva, Si suoni la tromba, and Rampe sprezza*), then *Vittoria segue* by Antonio Caldara, and closed with *Alla tromba della fama* by Baldassare Galuppi. Kiri Tollaksen gave a fine performance on cornetto, with piano accompaniment, of Crecquillon's *Onques amours*, with divisions by Bassano. An ensemble of natural trumpets played a quartet by Dauverné, followed by Karl Kemm on natural horn with the first movement of Mozart's *Concerto for Horn, K.447* with piano accompaniment. Also on horn, Eva Heater performed the second movement of *Sonata for horn and Piano* by Nicholas von Krufft; the harpichordist and pianist in all instances except the *Buccina Cantorum* was Jane Frogley. The concert closed with the cornett & sackbut band, led by Michael Holmes, performing *Regina coeli* by G. Gabrieli, *La Spagna* by Josquin, and *Angelus ad pastores*, also by Gabrieli.

After the concert, some participants left for home, while others joined the growing multitudes gathering for the main Amherst Early Music Festival. Fred Moyes, Susan Wilcox and Charlotte Leonard on sackbuts joined Paul Schmidt on serpent for some post-festival sight reading. The quartet

players through *Verbum caro* by Victoria, *Yellow Submarine* by the Beatles, and *When the Saints Go Marching In*. Later in the evening, Orum Stringer brought his curtal and some sheet music, and the quintet played (with some doubling) *La Fenice a 4* and *La Bavara a 4* by Cesare, *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* by Leonhard Lechner, *Pseume CIV* by Claude Goudimel, and *Sancte Deus* by Tallis. Fred had to leave, but the quartet continued with *Een vrouelic wesen*, *La Alfonsina* and *Las mi lares vous donc* by Johannes Ghiselin, Cliff Bevan's arrangement of Sullivan's *The Lost Chord* (this brought passionate applause from some Amherst attendees and a university harpsichord moving crew who had come, unnoticed, to listen), *Een vroylic wesen (I)* by Jacques Barbireau and finally closed with *Alia compositio supra ein fröhlich wesen* by Jacob Heer. The players departed tired but satisfied; in many ways the intimate environment of this final session, coupled with the benefits of the intensive practice of the preceding days, resulted in some of the best ensemble playing of the weekend.

- Bernard Fourtet's annual serpent class took place this year with six students, both beginners and advanced, plus Swiss sackbut player Theo Banz. The class participates in all projects of the Conservatoire National de Région de Toulouse, and tuba students are required to get a serpent initiation and certificate. Serpent students are requested to assist the Plain Chant class.
- The Early Music Course International of Daroca (Spain) took place this year from August 3 through 10. Bernard Fourtet has presented this course for 12 years.



About the Organization

The Serpent Newsletter is distributed according to two regions, each with its own representative. All financial contributions and new subscriptions should be sent to the proper regional representative. Announcements, editorial items, comments and photographs should be sent to the editorial address.

(United Kingdom & European continent)

Nigel Nathan
Boswedden House
Cape Cornwall
St. Just-in-Penwith
PENZANCE
Cornwall TR19 7NJ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1736 787683
Fax: +44 (0)1736 788733
email:
<serpents@boswedden.org.uk>

(USA, Canada, other countries, Editor, Treasurer)

Paul Schmidt, editor
Dick George, treasurer

Serpent Newsletter
P.O. Box 954
Mundelein, IL 60060
USA

editorial fax: 847-356-7865
email:
<ocleide@earthlink.net>
webpage:
serpentwebsite.com

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Where Serpents Gather

- In the April 2002 issue of this newsletter, an error was made regarding the serpentizing of two west coast players. Mark Jacobs of Oregon did NOT play at the Big Brass Bash, but DID play serpent with the Jefferson Baroque Orchestra for their performance of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* in May of 2000. And, Leonard Byrne of Spokane, Washington, DID play at the 2001 Northwest Big Brass Bash that was held at Central Washington University at Ellensburg (not Tacoma). At the bash, Leonard DID perform Bevan's *Variations on "The Pesky Serpent"*. Leonard writes that he has also been playing serpent and/or ophicleide for 10 years or more with Spokane area performances of the *Royal Fireworks*, usually doubling the contrabassoons.

- On July 19, Doug Yeo played ophicleide with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for the Tanglewood concert that included Rossini's *Siege of Corinth Overture*, with Federico Cortese directing. The work's premiere performance, under the title *Maometto II*, was in Naples and used three trombones and serpent; when Rossini revised it

and renamed it for the Paris premiere in 1826, he changed the serpent part to ophicleide.

- Ken Moffett, president of the East Tennessee Concert Band, writes that he has been playing serpent with the Greater Knoxville Recorder Society, adding his Harding instrument to their recorders, crumhorns and gambas. He is also working on converting a pawnshop trombone to sackbut by the usual means of bell trimming.
- The first Serpent Diploma ever realized for perhaps more than 150 years was presented on June 21 at the Early Music Department of the Conservatoire National de Région de Toulouse in France. It was part of a ceremony that also included diplomas for continuo, singing, traverso, recorder, viola da gamba, double bass and lute. Michel Nègre, from Bernard Fourtet's class, got the Professional Diploma with "mention Très Bien" (with honors), with a brilliant and astonishing recital, whose program was: plain chant excerpts from *Agnus* (1667) by G. Nivers, with the Capella Gregoriana, *Canzone a due tenori* by Selma y Salaverde, joined by L. Poveydebat on serpent and S. Growther on organ (possible misspellings here, *ed.*), *Diminution sur "Anchor che col partire" de Cipriano de Flore* (1591) by Giovanni Bassano, with organ. The program continued with more plain chant, *Hymne* by Nivers, an excerpt from *Sonate Concertate a 2 et a 3* (1630) by Giuseppe Scarani, with organ and two violins, *Quatre Tanka for Soprano and Serpent* (1998) by Drake Mabdy, with V. Reddet doing the vocal honors. The recital concluded with *Concerto à quatre basses "Le Phénix"* (1738) by Michel Corrette, with L. Poveydebat, E. Blandin, B. Fourtet on joining on serpents and S. Growther on harpsichord.

- Doug Yeo is in the process of presenting a few lecture/demonstrations at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. On Monday, October 7, he presented "The Sound of the Serpent" at 11:00 AM at the museum's Musical Instruments Gallery as part of the "First Monday" gallery talks series. The program consisted of an introduction to the serpent, with Doug playing his 1810 Baudouin church serpent in C, followed by a discussion of serpent origins and construction, an introduction to the museum's serpents, and a question and answer session.

On October 16, Doug will participate as part of the museum's new "Friends of Musical Instruments" group discussion series at 6:30 PM. Doug will demonstrate both serpent and ophicleide as part of this ongoing relationship with the museum. Earlier in the year, Doug presented *Musical Demonstration of Serpents of Baudouin* as part of the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS) annual meeting at the museum. He played and compared one of the museum's Baudouin serpents (in C, no keys, c. 1810, originally owned by Canon Francis Galpin) with his own Baudouin instrument (in C, 2 keys, c. 1810) and his Monk Workshop reproduction (in C, 1 key, 1996) which was based on Christopher Monk's own Baudouin serpent.

Serpent Newsletter

- Report of the Annual D.C./Richmond Area Serpent Get-Together

The annual Serpent get-together at Connie Palmer's in Henrico County, Virginia, is still alive and well, though we haven't reported to the Newsletter in some time.

A highlight of our 26 May 2001 meeting was a surprise performance for Tra Wagenknecht of *Concert Music for Bass Tuba* written by Tra's father, Florian Mueller, by Bob Pallansch, tuba, and his wife Merrillee playing the piano reduction done by the composer. What a wonderful surprise it was! This work was dedicated to and premiered by Arnold Jacobs performing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Désiré Defauw conducting on 19 April 1947. The first orchestral performance that we know of since 1947 was on 28 February 1998 by the Richmond (VA) Philharmonic Orchestra with David Townsend as soloist, RPO Music Director, Victoria Gau, conducting. A concert band arrangement, by Dr. Richard Schwartz and played by the Richmond Symphonic Winds conducted by Iris Schwartz, with Townsend as soloist, was premiered on 21 April 1998. The band arrangement was also performed by the Virginia State University concert band, Harold Haughton, Director of Bands at VSU conducting, with senior student, Victor Collins as tuba soloist, on 14 April 1999. Florian Mueller joined the oboe section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the late 1920s and played first oboe from 1929 – 1954. Tra has score and parts of both the orchestral and band versions available for anyone who might like to perform this historic tuba solo.

The 2002 serpent session on 25 May was really a celebration. It turned out to be the get-together's 10th anniversary. Connie was hostess to Tra and Robert Wagenknecht of Chesterfield County, Virginia; Merrillee and Bob Pallansch, of Falls Church, Virginia; and Iris and Rick Schwartz, of Colonial Heights, Virginia.

We had our usual great time playing serpent quartets, trios, and duets, as well as adding ophicleides, flute, Bb cornet, Eb alto horn, Eb valved trombone, and whatever else was handy. Merrillee Pallansch did her usual wonderful storytelling. This year Bob and Merrillee played a Baroque era piece on ophicleide and piano. Rick Schwartz and Merrillee performed *Homage to Theodor Hoch* composed by Rick, and played by him on a Boosey & Hawkes Echo Cornet built in London prior to 1882. This cornet had at one time been owned by Dana Garrett, who played it in circus bands before he played cornet with Sousa from 1923-1926. Rick performed the public premiere of this piece at his faculty recital at Virginia State University on 14 March 2002.

On Sunday 26 April the group proceeded to Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, where Tra is Director of Music, in the village of Matoaca in southern Chesterfield County. With the accompaniment of flute (Iris), cornet (Rick), ophicleides (Robert and Bob) and the addition of guitar

(George Wagenknecht), drums (Caroline Wagenknecht), and piano (Verta Blake, the church's organist), the Chancel Choir sang the Marcus/Feldman/Leavitt anthem *River in Judea* with Tra conducting. After the service we ended our weekend with brunch together with Connie and George's wife, Maggie, and oldest daughter, Miranda, at the restaurant at Swift Creek Mill Playhouse in Chesterfield.

Our annual events would not be complete without music making, good food, drink and conviviality.

Submitted by Tra Wagenknecht



Paul Schmidt playing the Box-O-Cleide prototype

- Report on the Doug Yeo Serpent Recording Project

Scheduled for a Fall 2003 release, this historic recording project is well underway. Doug Yeo has long wished to make a recording featuring only serpent and spanning the breadth of the repertoire. Since he first started playing serpent in 1994, with the BSO's Berlioz *Messe Solennelle*, one thing has led to another; the commissioning of his Monk serpent, the purchase of his Baudouin instrument, the performances with the BSO and other groups of the Proctor *Serpent Concerto*, the Handel *Music for the Royal Fireworks* recording with the Boston Baroque Orchestra, the 2000 Early Brass Festival performance, the articles for the Historic Brass Society Journal and much more. Recording a solo album for serpent, showing the full panoply of roles in history, has been a distant but vibrant goal. Inspired by the

fine playing on CD's by Michel Godard, Bernard Fourtet and Phil Humphries, he decided to plug the holes their recordings don't cover.

Three recording sessions were planned, and the first has already taken place; the others are scheduled for March and May of 2003. On April 22, 2002, the first session in Boston's Symphony Hall featured solos, duets, and trios for serpent. In this session, Doug was assisted by Craig Kridel on serpent and bells, and by Deborah DeWolfe Emery on piano. Brad Michel of Clarion Productions was the engineer; he is very experienced in making recordings of historical instruments, with over 100 projects for Harmoni Mundi to his credit. During this session, Doug's friend Stephen Gerber assisted with many loose ends.

The session began with four 18th & 19th century duos originally written for serpent, all taken from serpent tutor books. Doug played his Baudouin serpent and Craig used his Monk instrument, both with historically accurate mouthpieces. They recorded the *Military Style Duet in F major "Staccato"* by Roze, *Duo 2 "Largo Grazioso" in D major* by Hardy, and *Duo in F minor "Andante"* by Gossec. They capped this part of the session by recording a six bar long duet version of National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" theme, arranged by Craig, in anticipation of a possible future program; 'wishful thinking' writes Doug.

Next came the trios, with two selections being in homage to the London Serpent Trio and their classic 1981 recording *Sweet and Low*. First was *March from Scipione (Scipio)* by Handel, and then Sieber's *Foxtrot*. Doug recorded the top voice with Craig playing the middle, then Doug overdubbed the bottom line; the arrangements were the same ones used by the LST on their album.

After lunch, Doug and Craig were joined by Debbie Emery on the BSO's Hamburg Steinway grand piano. Doug and Debbie recorded Bevan's *Variations on "The Pesky Serpent"* for serpent and piano, with Doug reciting the historic 1840 poem copied in the score (both poem and original tune date from that time in Massachusetts). Next, they turned their attention to the Proctor *Serpent Concerto*, with Craig playing the bell part; he used the original set of "medieval bells" which Simon Proctor found so inspirational while visiting Craig many years ago. It was decided to use the piano accompaniment version of the piece, as opposed to the full orchestral version, for reasons of funding and logistics. A piano is not an orchestra, but Simon's piano reduction works very nicely and gives the piece a remarkable energy and drive. To play all the parts in the piano score, including the optional ones in brackets, Debbie overdubbed those sections in order to produce the melody, counter melody and bass line. Doug used his custom metal mouthpiece by Yamaha, a modified copy of a Monk version.

The next session will include selections of harmoniemusik: the *"Allegretto" from Symphony 7* by Beethoven and the *Divertimento (Feldpartita) in B flat, Hob 46 "St. Antoni"* by Pleyel (formerly attributed to Haydn), with members of the BSO. Also scheduled for this session is *Quatre Tanka* by Drake Mabry for serpent and soprano, with Jennifer Ashe, and *Three Serpent Etudes* by Metoyen. The third session will be for serpent and choir, where the Gloria Dei Cantores of Orleans, MA will assist with two pieces: Bevan's *Les Mots de Berlioz* for choir with buccin (Ben Peck), serpent (Doug), ophicleide (Phil Humphries) and bassoon (as commissioned by the Berlioz Historical Brass), and a realization by Peter Wilton of the *DuMont Royal Mass* for choir with serpent (commissioned by Craig Kridel).

This is a very exciting project, and this newsletter will include more information as it becomes available.

More Exciting News

- Ever since the Serpent Website went online years ago, readers have emailed asking how they can obtain a serpent on the cheap. Usually these individuals are students or parents of students, and often the student has a music project, has seen a picture or museum display, and is one way or another infatuated with the serpent. Usually they have neither the time or money required to locate or commission and purchase a real or antique instrument. The most common requests have to do with methods or plans for building serpents at home.

Those who have attempted to fabricate serpents know that these projects take lots of preparation and construction time, and usually result in highly inferior instruments. One cannot achieve the characteristic conical bore, needed for both the main body and the bocal, using sections of pipe (the solution commonly tried). Even the more diligent makers, who might laboriously build the bulk of the instrument from papier mâché or fiberglass, have run into problems when trying to make conical bocals.

This editor has pondered this dilemma for quite a while, and has arrived at a design that successfully addresses the following top-ten issues : 1) very low cost for the experimenter, 2) reasonably quick to build, 3) no metal work required, 4) proper serpent conical bore maintained throughout, 5) acceptable playing characteristics, 6) reasonably authentic serpent timbre, 7) playable using typical serpent fingerings, 8) presentable appearance, 9) workable with either a readily available trombone or euphonium mouthpiece, and 10) can be built without special skills and using only common tools likely to be found in most households.

The design uses three primary shortcuts to achieve these 10 points. First, the entire instrument is made of plywood, including the bocal. Second, the cross section is square

instead of circular. Third, no attempt is made to approximate any of the traditional serpent shapes. The prototype was made over a weekend for about US \$20, and has since been used successfully in ensemble situations. While not a substitute for a 'real' serpent, whether it be an antique, or one of the reproductions, this is a valid musical instrument that should be of interest to the casually or temporarily interested, or those potential players who simply cannot come up with the money for the real thing.

A photo of the prototype was distributed via email to many serpentists, and a number of whimsical names came back. I especially liked "Periscopaphone", but finally settled on "Squarpent", pronounced square-pent. Photos of the fabrication, plus downloadable details in PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format are now on the Serpent Website.

- After the success of the Squarpent in July, this editor began to wonder whether the same concept could be used to emulate an ophicleide, a decidedly more complex instrument. As of the end of September, the prototype square ophicleide made its debut public appearance (along with the Squarpent) for André Larson and museum staff, during a visit to the Shrine to Music Museum in South Dakota. While suffering from faulty intonation, lack of a practical means of tuning, and general crankiness of the key system, it is in fact a playable instrument with a genuine ophicleide sound. Built over three weekends and costing almost US \$ 60, it satisfies the same strict requirements as the Squarpent; however, while it may be used casually by itself, it does not tune well enough to be used realistically in ensemble. Continuing in the spirit of this cheesy endeavor, the instrument has been dubbed "Box-O-Cleide". All parts came from the neighborhood hardware store, with the exception of the leather used for the pads, which came from a craft shop. Once again, students may be the primary group to want to build such an instrument, although it might be useful to the prospective ophicleidist who wishes to practice fingerings and techniques while saving up for a real one.

- Always one to put things in perspective, Craig Kridel responded to news of the Box-O-Cleide project by referring the editor to the website of one Henry Lim. Henry is a professional free-lance LEGO sculptor (not affiliated with the LEGO company) and amateur composer of piano pieces who works at the UCLA Music Library. Besides some very remarkable pieces of LEGO art, his ultimate creation is a full sized, playable harpsichord made entirely from LEGO parts, excepting the strings. He originally wanted to build a grand piano, but realized that without the strength of a metal frame the great amount of string tension would collapse any LEGO structure he could devise. By visiting his website <www.henrylim.org> one can view his projects and the in-depth harpsichord construction article and photos. There is also a downloadable MP3 file, with Henry playing the first movement of the *Goldberg Variations*. For those without web access, some statistics: the instrument is 3 feet wide, 6 feet long, and 1 foot high not counting the sculpted

legs. It required approximately 100,000 LEGO pieces in black, white, tan and red, has a 1 x 8' disposition, single choir, 61 notes, and weighs about 150 pounds. The less well known LEGO Technic series was used for the keys, plectra and pins. Amazing!

- Early Music America has just made some big changes. Interim director Ken Perlow is returning to retirement with the naming of new executive director Maria Coldwell, and with this change the EMA office has moved from Ohio to Washington state. The new contact information is: Early Music America, 2366 Eastlake Avenue East # 429, Seattle, WA 98102, phone 1-888-722-5288 or 1-206-720-6270, email is info@earlymusic.org, and the website is <www.earlymusic.org>

- Chris Gutteridge in England has written to advise about two new websites. First, The Mellstock Band has a new site (although the older, limited site is still up) at <www.mellstockband.com>, and Chris' Hands On Music organization is at <www.handsonmusic.org.uk>

- John Davies of the Wirral Community Wind Band in the UK has put up a new website dedicated to the ophicleide and its players. The site includes a photo gallery of players with their instruments, links to ophicleide related websites, an instrument specific discography, and a space for listing persons having ophicleides for sale or wanting to buy. The URL is <www.wcwband.co.uk/ophicleide.htm>

- Doug Yeo has added a serpent photo gallery to his website <www.yeodoug.com/serpent_photos.html> , including pictures of himself playing various instruments, as well as some pictures provided by others.

- Mark Jones has written that things still turn up in 2002 despite the Antiques Roadshow and eBay. In June, he attended an estate sale in Frewsburg, NY near the Pennsylvania border. In the attic of the old farm house as an anonymous 9 key ophicleide with mouthpiece in a beautiful coffin style case. Mark was the winner of this sweet instrument, and only had to compete with one other buyer who knew what the object was, but still got it for a good price. Information on the previous owner was not available, but other objects in the house went back to the Revolutionary War. Bob Pallansch has indicated that he is currently giving this horn a going over in his shop, and another restored 'cleide should soon be back in action.

- Doug Yeo writes: In February/March 2002, I was an "in residence" visiting artist with the Clear Lake High School Band in Houston, Texas. While I did not bring my serpent with me for the trip, the students at the school, including my nieces, Laura and Sarah, knew of my serpent exploits and decorated the band room with several posters welcoming me to the school, including this evocative image of a serpent (which is printed in this newsletter).